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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings from one in a series of four case studies on leadership in schools dedicated to educational reform. It describes the process undertaken by staff at Cross Keys Middle School in Flourissant, Missouri, to develop a school mission related to the national middle schools movement. Changes made in the school's program, policy, and practice to implement the school mission are delineated. The leadership roles of the principal, administration, and teachers are discussed in detail, as well as the professional and interpersonal relationships among these participants. The leadership functions played by committee decision-making structures and teaching teams and the role of district influences are described. The resulting tension and conflict are examined as a productive way to maintain and evaluate change. Two figures and three tables are included. (LMI)

# *The Story of Cross Keys Middle School*
# *Learning to Ask the Right Questions*

## The National Center for School Leadership

## Project Report



**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

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*In collaboration with*

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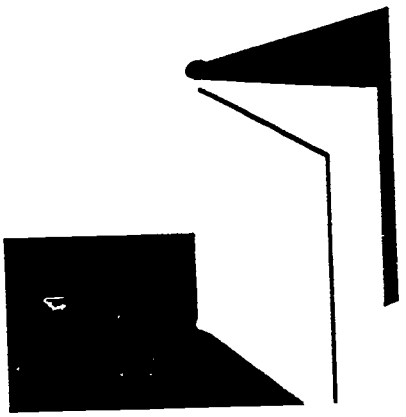

# *The Story of Cross Keys Middle School Learning to Ask the Right Questions*

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# The National Center for School Leadership

*Committed to Leadership and Learning*

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# Cases in Distributed Leadership
# A General Introduction to the Study

In order to broaden our understanding of leadership in schools committed to reform, we selected four buildings which were committed to one of three types of educational reform: the network of Accelerated Schools (Levin & Hopfenberg, 1991), the National Association of Middle Schools (Quattrone, 1990), or the Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1988). Each of these reforms respects the contextual differences across districts; each of these reforms espouses a set of principles which are central to their thinking about reform; and each of these reforms values collaboration among teachers and administrators. We chose four schools in three states to collect information which could better inform us about the role of leadership in schools striving to make changes.

Researchers developed a case study report for each site after reviewing background reports; interviewing faculty, administrators (in some cases), students and parents; and observing meetings and classes. The case studies and the cross case analysis will enable the reader to

1) Examine and evaluate the warrant that each of the cases deserve the label "having made progress" toward their commitment to reform.
2) Explore the nature of leadership, including the process of distributing leadership, among the school participants.
3) Speculate upon the interaction between leadership, the schools' commitment to change, and the schools' culture.

The case study methodology allowed us to observe the schools' social structures and leadership structures within the context of one year in the life of the change effort. A variety of rich resources are available to the researcher who spends extended time at a research site thus, "permitting a holistic study of complex social networks and complexes of social action and social meanings" (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg, 1991). Additionally, the time spent in the schools allowed for an historical overview of the change processes. Looking at the schools across cases offered the opportunity to look for common themes, theoretical underpinnings, and beliefs and decisions that guided the schools through their evolutions.

During Summer and Fall 1991, the NCSL research team met to establish criteria for site selection and systemize procedures for contact with each potential site. The selection criteria included four elements: a) the school must be publicly committed to a set of guiding principles for reform; b) the school must have local and, if possible, a state or nation wide reputation for having made progress toward putting these principles into practice; c) the school must be located near enough to a site researcher's home to permit regular visits to the school; and d) the school must agree to serve as a site. NCSL staff informally contacted school staff to determine possible interest in participating in the study while, at the same time, making inquiries into schools' reputations for making progress in their individual reform efforts. Schools were aware that they would be identified by name, but all staff members would be identified by pseudonym.

The NCSL staff ultimately chose four schools that met all of the selection criteria: Hollibrook Elementary School in Spring Branch, Texas; Dr. Charles E. Gavin Elementary School in Chicago Heights, Illinois; Cross Keys Middle School in Florissant, Missouri; and Roger L. Sullivan High School in Chicago, Illinois. Following the informal contact, the school principals were asked if they would like to be a site for a study of school leadership, defined broadly to include both teachers and administrators. In three of the schools, Hollibrook, Cross Keys, and Gavin, the principals agreed to participate after members of the school staff consented to become sites early in Fall 1991. At Sullivan the process took longer, in part because of a threatened teacher strike in the Chicago area. The principal initially agreed that an NCSL staff member could visit the school, but official permission to become a part of the study was not granted until early in 1992, once the school staff began to feel comfortable with the researcher's presence.

Data collection began in September 1991. During Fall 1991 site researchers visited the schools, observed meetings, sat in on classes, and talked informally with administrators and teachers. Data collection during Spring 1991 focused on semi-structured interviews with the school faculty, staff, and administration, and (in some cases) district administrators, parents, and students. Informal observations and discussions continued throughout the year.

The interviews were designed to accomplish two objectives: a) to gather information on participants' perceptions of change at their school, including their own roles in the change

process; and b) to identify people perceived to be school leaders, whether their leadership had anything to do with the change process or not. The informal observations and discussions served as points of triangulation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) for information obtained in the interviews, and also provided insight into the current status of reform in each school.

The resulting data were analyzed independently by each site researcher and also by two NCSL research assistants. As data became available the NCSL staff coded fieldnotes and interview transcripts into seven categories. In monthly research team meetings, the site researchers and the NCSL staff discussed both the categorization of fieldnotes and the themes that might be inferred from the data. These discussions enabled all researchers to review and reformulate a collective understanding of themes relating to school leadership and school change.

Once all data were collected (April 1992), each site researcher wrote an individual, narrative summary of his or her school case. The entire research team met three times to share internal drafts of the case studies. Each draft was read, questioned, and debated by all team members. To prepare the cross case analysis, two NCSL research assistants reviewed the entire corpus of fieldnotes and interviews. Data for each school were categorized according to statements related to mission, change, decision making, administrators, teachers, instruction, psychological environment, district relations, and community/family relations. These data were then summarized in paragraph form for each school, followed by a discussion of trends across schools as they related to each of the nine categories. The NCSL staff then condensed the categories into the three areas discussed above: a) the warrant for progress; b) the nature of leadership; and c) the interactions among leadership and school culture. The third drafts were shared with two external consultants, as was the second draft of the cross case analysis. Following these external reviews, the cases and the cross case analysis were revised for distribution as technical reports.

**The Story of Cross Keys Middle School**

**Learning to Ask the Right Questions**

**Abstract**

This report describes the ongoing activity within a middle school dedicated to reform. The leadership roles of the principal, administration and teachers are discussed in detail as well as the relationships between these school participants on a professional and interpersonal level. The author addresses the issue of tension and conflict as a productive means to continue and evaluate change. Attention here is also given to teaching teams and the various leadership functions that they and their members play in the functioning of a middle school.

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## Preface

I can't recall a time when a project has had such a powerful effect on me. Perhaps it is because I am a relatively inexperienced researcher, new to case study design and methodology, at developing and asking research questions, new to the entire process compared to veteran researchers who have spent their careers investigating fundamental questions related to teaching and learning.

Perhaps it is because conducting research at Cross Keys meant going home for this teacher-administrator turned university professor. I relived my own experiences as an elementary and middle school teacher and building principal and tested my ability to view the school from both perspectives. The project rekindled my belief in the principles of the middle school philosophy and the potential it has to bring about needed change in schools. That I was the researcher at Cross Keys was not an accident of fate. It was a decision of choice.

Perhaps it is the pressure of wanting my work to not only accurately, but more importantly, to adequately, tell the Cross Keys story. I believe it is an important one and I want to do it justice.

But perhaps in the end, it is the crisis of the American educational system that has affected me most of all. I believe that many children are hurting, are in pain, are indeed facing a crisis. I believe that the educational bureaucracy which has developed over the years is harmful to both children and adults and that changes of major proportions are needed. Schools which are working to understand how to make these needed changes, exemplary models of schools attempting to stop the pain, need to be identified and studied for what they have to share with others.

What makes a school exemplary may not be the answers it has to all of the questions, but that the questions are being asked. What makes a school exemplary may not be that its answers are all correct, but that its questions are. Perhaps it is not the school's organization, or structure, or curriculum, or policies; its plans, or programs, or activities, or facilities. Perhaps instead it is the school's willingness to confront the difficult issues, to struggle with problems because they are recognized, to see what most schools choose to ignore. Perhaps it is the school's integrity in admitting failure, in living with ambiguity,

in dealing with dissonance. In the end, perhaps what makes a school exemplary is the school's ability to look in the mirror and see what is there, to meet the reflection with honesty, and if what is seen is not what is desired, to act purposefully to change it.

One school that represents the struggle of many who are trying to meet the educational crisis head-on and to make needed changes is Cross Keys Middle School in Florissant, Missouri. At Cross Keys the administrators and staff are asking the right questions.

The Cross Keys struggle with issues of teaching and learning, about what works best with early adolescent learners, about how each person can fit and contribute, about what to teach and how it is best learned, can at times make the school seem like a war zone. The school participants argue and debate differing philosophical positions both in private and public. One can detect the symptoms of the battle in the bloodshot eyes of the staff, fighting a war they do not know how to win, but know with certainty they cannot lose.

The Cross Keys struggle can, at the same time, make the school seem like a haven. It is a place where intellect is sparked, professionalism is nurtured, and individual growth is valued. It is a place where minds can meet and work; a place where new ideas are stimulated and encouraged. One can see the symptoms of the haven in the sparkling eyes of the staff as they discuss their students and colleagues, their vision and commitment, their contribution and, yes, even their struggle.

What happens in schools as they wrestle with questions about leadership, curriculum, instruction, decision-making and change? What are the roles of the key players, and how do they deal with the issues of bureaucracy, tradition, expectation, and personal need to meet the challenge of preparing their children for a society with great demands? What is the mission of such a school? Its vision? Its culture? And how, by asking questions, can a school survive the crisis which evolves from a hard look at the realities of change?

This is the story of Cross Keys Middle School. It is a story that may enlighten the field about the struggle of change and the value of the struggle. It is a story that is both invigorating and exhausting, complex and simple, rational and illogical. It is a story of joy and a story of pain. It is a story that needs to be told.

The following six sections were organized to share what I have gathered from a year of learning at Cross Keys Middle School. And as the filter for the story, I have made

decisions about what to include, as well as exclude. "Making the Story" outlines the methodology, design, and procedures for the project. It will help the reader understand how the case study was developed and why it was conducted at Cross Keys. It provides the district and building context for the story. "The Story Began" defines the driving forces behind the school, and describes the school's commitment to a set of guiding principles related to the national middle school movement. It details the school's mission, how it evolved, and what it meant to the school. "The Story Continued" delineates what changes the school made in program, policy, and practice to bring their mission to life. "The Story Unfolded" tells how those changes were brought about. The section presents a topology of the leadership in the school to describe key players and how they worked to make decisions. Committee decision-making structures within the school as well as the district-level influences on the school are described. "How Does It Feel to be Part of the Story of Cross Keys" tells how individuals in the school responded to change and describes the resultant tension in the school. Finally, "What Can We Learn from Their Story" presents conclusions and implications of this study for others who might learn from the Cross Keys story.

## Making the Story

Located in the suburban St. Louis area, the Ferguson-Florissant School District was one of approximately 750 public school districts in the state of Missouri. The district had established a reputation for providing a quality education for the 10,976 kindergarten through twelfth grade students it served (46% African-American; 52% White; 2% other racial/ethnic groups). District financial resources provided a $5,324 per-pupil expenditure from district (73.1%), state (21.5%), county (1.7%), and federal (3.7%) sources.

The appointment of an internal candidate to the superintendency in December, 1991, prompted a reorganization of other central office assignments, tasks, roles, and functions. The new superintendent replaced one who had been hired from outside the district who had attempted to initiate major change in the district in a relatively short time period. One of her change targets related to middle-grades and education, as an advocate for this philosophy, she had brought the issue to the district's attention. Whether or not middle-grades issues would continue to be important for the district was dependent on the new superintendent's agenda. Thus, the district context was important in fully understanding the school and its change efforts related to middle school principles.

The Context

Constructed in 1968, the Cross Keys facility was developed with the future in mind. Adjacent rooms were separated by movable walls for flexibility; distinct wings were created for teaming, and a large media center was placed at the core of the building for accessibility. The one story building included 52 individual classrooms, cafeteria, lecture room, industrial arts, music, art, and home economics facilities, teachers' lounge, and office suites for counselors and administrators. Polished floors and freshly painted walls demonstrated the pride of the staff in their building. Student work, posters, banners, and plants made the school look neat, clean, and orderly. Things had their place and they were in them. The maintenance and cleanliness of the facility sent the message that those in the school valued their facility and public image.

In 1975, court-ordered desegregation brought changes to the school that, according to teachers, disrupted the fabric of the school's very tradition and culture. The once predominantly white, upper-middle-class clientele the school served changed to a more racially and economically diverse population. By 1991-92, the enrollment had declined from a one-time high of 1,900 to 641 seventh and eighth grade students of which 28% qualified for free or reduced lunch; 44% of the students were African-American, 55% White, and 1% Asian. The school worked hard to make the needed adjustments for their changing student population who had different problems, concerns, and learning needs than students of the past.

A new building principal brought even more changes to the school, and what happened at Cross Keys beginning in 1985 was markedly different from what had come before. The new principal inspired a school-wide commitment to the reform principles associated with the national middle-grades movement and activity in the school flourished. With a focus on the developmental needs of a diverse early adolescent population, interdisciplinary teams were reconfigured; curriculum was moved from a single subject-centered focus to one which integrated content across academic disciplines; instruction became more experiential, and students were expected to be active participants in the learning process. School committees were reorganized to shift decision-making, and personnel sought external validation for the progress they were making through recognition programs of grants. Table 1 summarizes some of these major milestones in the school's development. The story of Cross Keys Middle School was thus made in a context of expected excellence. The district had enjoyed a long history of community support and financial

stability. Above-average student achievement had come to be expected from the White, upper-middle class residents of the district. As the population shifted and enrollment declined, as court-ordered desegration redefined district and school boundaries, and as state and local resources began to dwindle, change in the district was inevitable. In addition to these changes, the school had initiated a reform plan of its own. Using the national middle school principles as their platform, the school had implemented numerous changes in program, policy, and a practice, in an attempt to better meet the needs of a changing student population. They too had enjoyed a rich tradition of excellence and were determined to make sure that the tradition continued. The leadership in the school faced enormous challenges as these internally and externally imposed changes were planned and implemented. They had to balance tradition and change, stability and reform, all the while upholding the banner of educational excellence.

Table 1

Cross Keys Middle School Developmental Milestones: 1986-1991

| | |
|---|---|
| 1986---------- | Reconfiguration of school formal committee structure: School Improvement Team (SIT) and Instruction Improvement Committee (IIC) developed: Communications Committee dissolved. |
| 1988---------- | Became a member of ASCD Middle Schools Planning Consortium. |
| 1989---------- | Recognized as an exemplary school by the United States Secondary School Recognition Program; Named a Missouri School of Excellence. |
| 1990---------- | Named a Danforth Marginal Learners/Responsive Schools Program Site; Recipient of *Crossroads* Computer Grant; Building Staff Advisory Committee initiated. |
| 1991---------- | School publication of *A Place of Our Own*; reduction-in-force eliminates six positions at Cross Keys for 1991-92; school teams reorganized for 1991-92; new assistant principal assigned to the building. |

## The Story Began: What Was the School's Mission?

The written mission statement for Cross Keys is evident in a variety of documents.

> Cross Keys Middle School dedicates itself to the service of children. Its mission is to produce self-sufficient citizens who are adaptable to change and who possess the self-esteem, motivation and skills to continue individual growth, solve complex problems, and respect cultural differences (ASCD publication, 1988).

While the written mission of the school appeared to be focused clearly on "educating all students," further evidence was needed to determine what this really meant to people in the school. How was this mission interpreted?

Mission Interpreted: All Students or Some?

Individual voices presented varied interpretations of what the mission to "educate all students" actually meant in practice. Part of the struggle seemed to center around the question of *meeting the needs of all students*. . . .

"I feel that we are committed to see that each student learns to the best of his ability. . . . "

. . . *of meeting the needs of all students who could meet certain standards* . . .

"I think we're also committed to maintaining . . . some standards of academic rigor, given the changing faces of the student population. . . ."

. . . *or of meeting the needs of some of the students, some of the time* . . .

"While we want every child to be successful and we should provide opportunities for that success, it is foolish to think you can have 100% success and if you don't that it's the fault of the system."

Some conflict also appeared during formal interviews with staff members in whether or not mission and commitment were personal or shared phenomena. *Was the mission mine?* . . .

"I am committed to my own goal, and my own goal is that students have fun with their learning."

*Was the mission "ours"? . . .*

"I think we are all committed to providing children with an excellent opportunity to learn."

*Or was it "yours" and "mine"?*

"There is certainly a wide range of commitments on the faculty. . . . It is different from group to group, and from teacher to teacher."

The voices combined to tell a story of confusion about the true mission of the school. While it would be generally accepted that the mission of the school was to "educate all students," putting that into practice with students who didn't succeed caused turmoil.

In addition to the school's struggle with what the mission really meant and how that mission was to be interpreted in practice, the school's commitment to a middle school approach as a way to meet the needs of their students was also debated. While a general commitment to the concepts associated with the national middle grades movement appeared to have been made in 1985, how those principles were defined at Cross Keys remained open for question.

On Becoming a Middle School: "Our" Way, "Their" Way, or "No" Way?

Although a general sense that the middle school concept was the pervasive structure for the organization and philosophy of the program emerged at Cross Keys, how middle school should be defined depended upon who spoke. Some conveyed a belief that middle school concepts defined in the literature should drive the Cross Keys program:

"There are still some areas that are described in the literature as middle school characteristics which I do not feel we have achieved."

Others believed that the school itself should define what was meant by the middle school:

> There aren't any tablets from God telling us what a middle school should be. . . . I just assumed that whatever these people who are writing about or telling us about

> the middle school is just advice. I don't consider their opinion any more valid than my own.

And others still questioned whether or not the middle school model was the best approach to take:

> There are people who still adamantly disagree with the idea that what we are doing is good for kids.

> We have something we can call a philosophy of our school that we didn't have that is largely due to the work the principal has done introducing us to some relatively current literature.

By using educational literature to guide the mission and commitment of the school, the program had direction. By questioning how the middle school model would be interpreted at Cross Keys, the staff enlightened others about how to make a middle school the best it could be, not merely better than others have been. Through presenting at national conferences (National Middle School Conference, 1991), hosting regional conferences (Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development Regional Conference, 1992), and writing curriculum materials (*A Place of Our Own*, 1991), the school served as a lighthouse for others.

The struggle with mission and commitment was not an easy one for the school. Voices which spoke with clarity about meeting the needs of all students by committing to the middle school philosophy were strong and clear. They had contributed to the progress made in the school. Voices which questioned both the school's ability to truly meet the needs of all students and the interpretation of *middle school* were also strong and clear. They too had made a contribution. The willingness of the school to raise important questions about the mission and how it was operationalized gave the mission life. Their mission was used to provide direction for how the school was organized, the long and short-range plans for the school, and what specific changes would need to be made.

Mission Interpreted: How Did It Affect Organization?

The organization of the school into interdisciplinary teams provided an operational structure for teachers to work more closely with fewer students. Interdisciplinary teams, characteristic of a middle school philosophy, created smaller communities for learning and

allowed teachers to know fewer students in greater depth than a traditional, departmentalized program. A team structure provided opportunities for teachers to see the same students several times during a school day. Blocks of time within the school's schedule allowed each team to vary class length, group and regroup students, and diversify the curriculum without the problems of working with the entire school schedule.

Five of the six teams at Cross Keys were organized as core, or academic teams, with a heterogeneous group of 130-to-145 students per team. Four were single-aged teams, housing either grade 7 or grade 8. The remaining team was a multi-aged team, housing both 7th and 8th grade students. The sixth team included teachers of the exploratory subjects (practical arts, home economics, foreign language, music, physical education, and art) and these teachers served all students in the school. Different combinations of grade configuration and teaching style characterized the school's interdisciplinary teams.

Time was provided for both individual and team planning. Planning was a critical element for implementation of the school's mission. During planning time teachers reported that they could develop curriculum together, discuss and share instructional strategies, meet with students and parents, and work to build the climate which would support the growth and development of the students now attending their school.

Of all of those interviewed, it was unanimous that all were committed to teaming. While they disagreed about *how* teams should function, they shared a commitment to teams as a way to organize the school to accomplish its mission.

Mission Interpreted: How Did It Affect Planning?

The school's long-range planning reflects the general direction and mission for the school. The first phase of reform in the school (1986-87 through 1990-91) focused on organization, instruction, schedule, student grouping, curriculum, culture, and leadership. The general direction of this first phase of reform was to move towards a middle school philosophy. "It has only been within the last five years that we wrote our first set of ideas of where we were going. We set it in writing to kind of direct us."

The five-year plan to move in the direction of a fully functioning middle school was based on issues facing the school in 1986. Changes in the student population and their ability to achieve as well as the adaptability of staff to meet these changing needs were issues to be addressed during the period from 1986-1990.

> The three general issues we had to address were the bimodal student scores, the growing lower portion of the student body, and the staff. . . . Many of our staff have been here 20 years and were trained in secondary and taught in a traditional junior high school. Faculty stereotypically had a mindset that if we work harder, we can make up for students' deficiencies. Working harder meant more work, stricter rules. . . . There was a blinder view on the part of some faculty. What we were doing didn't work.

In an attempt to address the problems facing the school, team restructuring occurred throughout this five year period. Various combinations of team organization, schedule, and approach were formed and reformed as a way to move from *cooperative teams* to *interdisciplinary teams*. "Prior to her [principal] coming, there were teams but there wasn't a thrust toward working together. . . . Now there is a push toward working with each other versus just having the team teach the same kids."

Variations within teams indicated that some had moved further along in implementing initial reform concepts than others. Some took advantage of the opportunity to change the schedule within the block of time, while others remained more constant in their use of a period of instruction for each subject. This variation in teaming was described during a conversation with one teacher as a benefit for students.

> Interviewer's question: Do you think the teams are the same here?
>
> Teacher: No, not at all. They run the gamut from being the most traditional to our team.
>
> Interviewer's question: And what is your team like?
>
> Teacher: We are the least traditional. . . . I think the goal has been for all of the teams to look like my team. I'm not sure anymore that that's a good idea. I think we have students who are more comfortable doing things the traditional way. . . .

Changes in curriculum and instruction varied across teams, as did the level of implementation of other components of the five year plan. While all teams incorporated some interdisciplinary units as part of their program, the frequency was largely dependent on the individual team.

Although the school's first "Five Year Plan" had not yet been fully implemented, they had embarked on a second "Five Year Plan" for 1990-91 through 1994-95, which represented what the school calls their "final phase of reform." Future changes in curriculum will center on implementing, refining, and evaluating the active focus of the curriculum set in the first "Five Year Plan." Social service resources will be identified. Instructional changes will include improved school communication, expanded exploration, and multi-grade grouping. Reform of the school's culture will focus on improved team processes, celebration of the school's successes, an examination of school procedures, and a redesign of school systems.

Although loosely defined, the general mission of the school appeared to be to meet the needs of all students using a middle school philosophy. Leaders in the school, however, saw the opening for interpretation as an opportunity to discuss and debate exactly what their mission meant and how it would be interpreted in program and practice. Leaders throughout the school stimulated formal and informal dialogue about key issues related to mission. Planned changes were not necessarily implemented by the entire school. Rather, individuals and teams were allowed the autonomy to proceed at varying rates to implement the changes in organization, scheduling, curriculum, and instruction that would operationalize their middle school mission.

**The Story Continued: What Changes Were Needed to Bring the Mission to Life?**

State and district motivation for change came from the mandates and pressures placed on the school to do more with less.

> Money, or the sizes of our class, the number of staff members the district allows us to keep, the state . . . they are a whole lot more aggravating than the pressures we put on ourselves to try to accomplish something.

Other changes in the school resulted from decisions made at the district level. The appointment of an internal candidate to the superintendency and subsequent reorganization of key central office positions changed the perceptions of individuals in the school about what course the district might take in the years to come. Diminishing district-level finances caused a reduction in number of teachers staffed into the building, which resulted in changes in the number, size, and function of teams and their grade level

configuration. Reductions in the numbers of teachers in the school also brought about changes in class size. More students per team meant more students per class.

> Our class sizes this year are a big issue. There are 23 [students per class] on my team this year compared to 17 or 18 last year. So we are talking across the board, a handful of kids added to each class.

An increase in class size also caused curriculum to change. Teachers reported a change in the use of interdisciplinary units, hands-on activities, and the general daily functioning of the school. But some of the concern about class size had more to do with what the students were like rather than how many of them were assigned to a class. Teachers generally were concerned that the changing needs of the population, coupled with the already turbulent behavior of the early adolescent, would make a small increase in numbers seem like a large increase in demand. And still others felt that, "Extra kids in the class is the flag that goes up and that is what they pick on."

This voice echoed others in the building that told of frustration over changes which were happening *to* them, *by* them, and *around* them. And change, in any form, was seldom easy.

> Teachers do not want to change the way they look at things. I don't want to change the way I look at things, but I realize I have had to do it to adapt. . . . Let's face it. Education is a mammoth institution and we tend to teach as we were taught, and changing is not easy. Even intelligent, educated people simply do not want to change.

Internal Change: Which Changes Were Made by The School?

Changes have advanced beyond simple "tinkerings" with organization and structure. While teachers expressed some discomfort with the organizational changes that had been made, they were not identified as the *hard* changes that were needed to make the mission of the school a reality. Changes in curriculum and in instructional practice, initiated both by teachers and by administration, represented the *hard* changes that the school had begun to address. Making the hard changes in curriculum and instruction truly tested the school's commitment to its mission and defined its character and ability to deal with ambiguity and conflict.

During the year of study at Cross Keys, many people mentioned the interdisciplinary curriculum. The principal's commitment to finding ways to integrate subject areas was evident in her involvement in national, state, and regional associations related to middle school curriculum, her network with middle-level curriculum researchers, and her own work with the staff to support the development of interdisciplinary units in the school.

*A Place of Our Own*, written in 1991, made the school's work in curriculum development available to the public. The work was based on the creation of a metaphor called "entrancing," which linked the student directly to the curriculum. It presented a "series of curricular units designed to be models of a new curriculum for middle school" (p. xii). The publication indicated the leadership role the school had taken in prompting curriculum reform in middle schools across the nation. Through *CROSS*Net* any individual or school could become active in middle-grades curriculum development by exchanging curriculum units based on the entrancing model.

Within the school, support for the staff to develop interdisciplinary units using the entrancing metaphor was provided. Release time, retreats, workshops, and in-service opportunities allowed individuals and teams to develop new units or to refine existing units. These supports were provided both through district in-service opportunities and by the school through the grants they had secured. During the year of this study, for example, a district-wide workday was devoted to interdisciplinary curriculum development. A follow-up faculty meeting provided time for teams to share their work with colleagues. It appears that interdisciplinary units are indeed being used in the school.

While some of the teachers took the opportunity to work on curriculum development during the workdays, and others also used time during team meetings to explore and develop interdisciplinary curriculum, not everyone felt that the development of interdisciplinary units was a choice. The following dialogue which occurred during a team meeting indicates that some felt threatened to complete their work:

Teacher 1: I was in the office and I know they want us to write a new unit Thursday and Friday [workdays].

Teacher 2: If they give us a week off, then I'll do it.

Teacher 1: You'll do it if you want a job.

The focus on interdisciplinary curriculum was exciting for some and troublesome for others. Some asked questions about "how to integrate" and others asked "why." And while some voices spoke of the attention in the school on cooperative learning, learning styles, heterogeneous grouping, and hands-on activities, other voices talked of drill and practice, worksheets, and lecture. For some the hard changes about curriculum and instruction had already been made. For others the change was yet to come.

Leaders in the school had to address the demands for change which were prompted by external forces at the same time actions were being implemented to operationalize their middle school mission internally. Sometimes the leaders in the school acted as buffers against the demands from the outside to protect the staff from unneeded or unwanted intervention. Leaders occasionally used outside pressures as supportive evidence to promote a particular course of action. At other times leaders had to work hard to inform external groups making demands on the school of the negative impact that change might have on their middle school mission. Yet whether the demand for change originated from a force internal or external to the school, the leaders consistently attempted to implement changes which brought their mission to life. Understanding who the leaders were in the school, what roles they assumed, how they worked, and what they were able to accomplish became an important piece of the Cross Key story.

## The Story Unfolded: How Were Changes Made?

The individuals and groups in the school who had been willing to be on the front line taking risks exemplified the courage needed to embrace change. These lead characters in the change effort were identified in different ways by various voices in the school. Some told of leaders who posed as role models and examples for others to follow. Some defined leaders by their integrity, courage, persistence, or talent. Some talked of leaders who held positions or of leaders who had vision. Some described leaders who carried the banner of opposition. But when all had spoken, it became clear that the lead characters were distributed throughout the school and that these leaders were courageous in their own ways in dealing with the turmoil associated with implementing change in the school.

> When you ask about leadership in this school, you have to qualify leadership because different people are leaders in different ways in this school.

Leaders of influence, of curriculum, of groups, of direction, and of the opposition were praised for their personal character, skills and talents, vision, or for the work they completed through the roles they assumed in the district or building. I categorized these people as *prestigious leaders* (leaders of influence), *instructional leaders* (leaders of curriculum), *positional leaders* (leaders of groups), *visionary leaders* (leaders of direction), and *resistance leaders* (leaders of the opposition). Teachers and administrators alike were identified in light of these five categories, which were not mutually exclusive classifications of the leaders who worked in the school to influence change.

Table 2

Typology of Leadership at Cross Keys Middle School

| | |
|---|---|
| o**Prestigious Leaders**: Nonpositional teacher leaders; people of unquestioned integrity; people of courage; people with special talents | **Leaders of influence** |
| o**Instructional Leaders**: Individual teachers and a team of teachers who have developed interdisciplinary curriculum | **Leaders of curriculum** |
| o**Positional Leaders**: Teacher association officers; department chair-persons; team leaders; committee chairs and members | **Leaders of groups** |
| o**Visionary Leaders**: Building principal; individual teachers and staff who explored new ideas | **Leaders of direction** |
| o**Resistance Leaders**: Individual teachers who spoke out against general and specific directions in the school | **Leaders of the opposition** |

*Prestigious leaders* in the school influenced their colleagues through their character strength. These were individuals who had their "finger[s] on the pulse of this staff better than anybody in the school," and were described as "real down-to-earth kind of folks [who were] able to sway people." Individuals who had integrity and were "willing to admit when [they were] wrong and move beyond that," or who had "a lot of guts and [were] willing to speak up when [they] see things are wrong" were complimented often by their

colleagues for the contributions they had made in the school. These leaders had gained the support of a significant portion the staff who believed in the ideas they put forth and agreed with the direction they wanted to take the school. Prestigious leaders were able to bring about many internal program changes in the school because their support gave credibility to a particular idea, and others knew they did not give their support unless convinced that an idea was sound.

*Instructional leaders* in the school were respected for their understanding and skill in the development of curricular and instructional strategies. Teachers who were willing to share their instructional expertise and curricular innovations were identified again and again during interviews as being important for the school. These leaders could "get people to be a little more creative with curriculum," and were "the ones that other teachers look to as being strong educators." And while individuals were cited for their leadership in curriculum, so too was one team in the school. "[Team name] have an understanding of interdisciplinary teaching and curriculum. . . . As far as leaders and role models, they are the ones to watch." Instructional leaders in the school promoted many of the changes in curriculum and instruction (which had occurred). They were the teachers who wrote, implemented, and experimented with integrated curriculum, interdisciplinary units, cooperative learning, and instructional role-play. Their willingness to risk, to challenge conventional thought, and then to advocate these new practices in light of conflicting views moved the school forward in significant ways towards the actualization of its middle school mission.

*Positional leaders* in the school were those who held formal leadership roles in the district or building. Some were identified for the positions held in the professional organization in the district and some for the roles as chairs of departments or team leaders. The discussion of these leaders focused primarily on the position and the authority vested in the position as well as the individual. These positions were characterized as important for the opportunities provided for decision-making within the district and the school. Positional leaders were most influential when they were also identified as a leader in another category. For example, a team leader who was also perceived to be an innovator in curriculum and instruction did much to promote change as a *positional instructional leader* because she used her position as a platform to share her ideas and beliefs about instruction. Another team leader focused solely on team management issues, and this had less impact on the change process.

*Visionary leaders* provided the direction, impetus, and focus for the changes which had taken place. Vision "comes from [the principal]. I think she provides the support. But I think a lot of it comes from people like [teacher name] who has an idea and wants to try it out."

The visionary leadership of the building principal became a critical theme to the story of Cross Keys. The principal commented that "leaders have to have some sense of where you are going. . . . I hate to use the word vision because everybody uses that, but it is the truth." Her vision of Cross Keys as "a fully functioning middle school" was commented on often by teachers and articulated in written documents of the school.

The principal often collaborated with a long-time personal friend and professional colleague, a part-time counselor in the school and part-time grant writer for the district. Her skill in writing and developing proposals for grants and recognition programs is an important piece of the story. Working with and through the principal, she supported ideas, initiated ideas, and collaborated with the principal on achieving a common vision. She was often identified by voices in the school as an important character in the story, an influential force in the change process of the school. The concept of entrancing in *A Place of Our Own* (1991) was an example of the collaborative effort of the principal and counselor and demonstrated their vision for students and their needs.

The principal described her own style as "support giving," but noted that she would also "go immediately to control taking" if she perceived that actions had a negative impact on students. She knew too that her style differed from what some teachers wanted.

> The bottom line is this. The teachers want me to be something I can't be, number one. Number two, I am willing to give some, but I am not willing to give it all away. I am not willing to let you do what you think is best for kids if what you think is best for kids is what is really best for you. And therein is the conflict. Will that ever be resolved? Probably not. Can we live with it? Yes. I do not always do what they say. I try to hold up things for them to look at, the dissonance in what they say to themselves.

She believed that "you have got to create some dissonance. I get people talking about something that is important and get them to agree and disagree. I think that is healthy."

The principal created dissonance early in the change process by forcing a hard look at the research on middle-level education. As she presented information in faculty meetings, through readings, and through attendance at various workshops, teachers debated the issues which would impact the program at the school. The principal created further discomfort when "she shifted the teacher leadership. In a sense, she took leadership away from people who had had it for years and started to look at other people."

But some argued that it was more a matter of *how* the principal implemented her vision rather than *what* her ideas entailed.

> I think it is a level of discomfort on the faculty's part with management style. I have only been in this school a short time compared to a lot of other folks, and often you get into a mode or you begin to think, and rightfully so, that "I have been in this place and I know how things work. I know how to deal with these kids." And you tend to get blinders on. And then somebody comes in and says, "We are going to take a new approach."

While perspectives differed with regard to the principal's leadership style, there was a general consensus that her role as an entrepreneur was important for the school. The principal's ability to secure additional funding provided not only time for teachers to plan and work on projects, but also brought resources to the school which would directly impact the program for students. Her political savvy, as well as her national, state, and regional network and reputation allowed her to interface with individuals and groups that could directly benefit the school. "She's a great money finder. If we really want to do something, it'll get funded somehow, some way. We don't ask questions. It just sort of appears."

The principal's hope that her vision could, in fact, be realized motivated her continued work in the school. Her commitment and belief in the kind of changes the school had been through and those it was yet to witness were a burning force in her work. She recognized that change would not always be pleasant and that those who would be involved in the process would be challenged. She believed that "schools should be about kids' agendas. That is what I work toward. And it doesn't always make everybody very happy."

*Resistance leaders* emerged from the disequilibrium and created tension in the school. Some of the voices in the school willingly acknowledged their dissatisfaction with the

direction that the school had taken or had planned to take, or were uncomfortable with the style in which changes were implemented. While some voices would call these individuals "naysayers," others identified these individuals as "the other party . . . the loyal opposition."

Leaders of the opposition appeared to have a general discomfort with some of the practices and procedures in the school. The group identified as representative of the opposition was small, but their dissension had an impact on the school. The leaders of the opposition questioned issues, initiated discussion, and presented alternative plans both through informal networks and through the Staff Advisory Council. Individuals in the school who were consistently identified as resisters had had some type of professional disagreement with the principal which had become public information in the school. Regardless of whether the disagreement was related to what the school's priorities should be as how staff should be involved in decision-making, disagreements between leaders became an important dynamic in the school. Differences and similarities were brought into clearer focus for everyone in the school because of the forum provided by leaders who disagreed with one another and who were willing to publically debate the issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

> I think we have leaders of the opposition. People who are loyal or otherwise. I think there is some thoughtful opposition here. They legitimately ask, "Why are we doing this?" "How am I going to get this done?" "How am I going to feel good about it if I am only going to do it halfway?" They have a healthy skepticism about things and they want the dots on the i's and the crosses on the t's before they just jump in and start.

Clearly overlaps existed across these five categories of leadership at Cross Keys, and participation by individuals in these roles was fluid. Individuals were identified as exhibiting more than one type of leadership or influence in the school over the course of time, depending on the given issue and context. Some saw themselves as leaders in the school and their identification was corroborated by their colleagues. Others, however, perceived themselves as leaders and were not considered such by their colleagues. In combination, the *prestigious, instructional, positional, visioning, and resistance leaders* were instrumental in bringing about change in the school. By working at times in harmony and at other times in conflict, they forced important issues to surface and important questions to be asked. They were willing to take risks, to try new ideas, to test

relationships, and to challenge themselves and their own beliefs in the process. These leaders were willing to work alone and to stand alone when necessary. Yet they also worked with others through the more formal structures in the school to promote change, and sometimes these structures succeeded and sometimes they failed.

School Committees: Which Ones Worked and Which Ones Didn't?

Formal decision-making structures were viewed by some as effective and necessary and by others as dysfunctional. Some questioned the purpose of the committees which had been established, others clearly saw them as a means of influencing change. The work of these committees had produced programs and policies for the school, but for some, the committees simply generated more questions to be asked.

Traditional and nontraditional formats have been used to involve staff members in planning for the school's future, providing professional development, dealing with curricular and instructional issues, and addressing the concerns of the staff. Primarily, these committees were suggested and implemented by the building principal as a way to involve staff in the decision-making of the school.

The Communications Committee, previously the sole building-level committee, once served as a clearinghouse for staff concerns from "anything as paltry as 'there's no toilet paper in the women's john,' to field trip concerns, to program concerns." In an attempt to "reconfigure the leadership in the school," the principal developed three additional committees in the school and eliminated the Communications Committee.

Over the course of time, the Instructional Improvement Committee (IIC), School Improvement Team (SIT), and Instructional Resource Persons (IRPS) were formed. But by 1990, the need for some type of faculty committee again emerged. The Staff Advisory Council, initiated by a signed petition with 30 signatures, was formed by a team of elected representatives, who, armed with district policy which gave them the right to establish such an advisory group within the building, set out to make the committee a viable part of the school's structure. The perception that the other committees, IIC, SIT, IRPS, were not addressing all of the needs in the school prompted action by those who wanted to create a forum for those needs to be heard. Having learned from the operation of the Communications Committee those strategies which would be effective and those to discard, the Staff Advisory Council was formed in its image. With the inclusion of the Staff Advisory Council, four committees were organized in the school during the year of this study.

Table 3

Cross Keys Middle School Building-Level Committee Structure

| Committee | Composition | Focus |
|---|---|---|
| Instructional Improvement Committee (IIC) | 8 classroom teachers<br>1 counselor<br>1 assistant principal<br>principal | Daily Issues<br>(Ex: development values/mission; reading program; advisory program) |
| School Improvement Team (SIT) | 5 classroom teachers<br>1 counselor<br>1 assistant principal<br>principal | Visionary<br>(Ex: Five Year Plans; yearly building plans) |
| Instructional Resource Persons (IRPS) | department chairs<br>team leaders Development<br>elected representatives<br>principal | Staff<br>(Ex: Brain-based instruction) |
| Staff Advisory Council | representatives of each team & support staff<br>teacher chair suspension; hall administrative representative | Teacher Concerns<br>(Ex: In-school supervision; use of Xerox machine; input for faculty meeting topics) |

With the exception of the Staff Advisory Council, the principal invited individuals to participate on the committees to serve an unspecified term. Teachers generally appeared uncertain about the role and function of SIT, IIC, and IRPS. The committees were viewed by some as "administrative arms" and "controlled by the principal," and by others as "visionary," "participatory" and "places where decisions are made." Although the structures were in place for each of the four committees, SIT, IIC, and IRPS were inactive during the year of study. Some thought that the school's committees were inactive due to an administrative directive, while others believed that the committees did not meet because there were no issues which needed to be addressed, and still others believed that the very organization and composition of the committees influenced their ability to make decisions which would be acknowledged by the staff. "Some of the people that are on the SIT committee aren't perceived by the staff as being leaders, and so there's a real problem

there. I mean, you can't lead if nobody follows." Finally, the amount of time and energy required to participate fully on the school's committee was cited as a deterrent. "I think people who were willing to volunteer fell by the wayside. They said, 'Look, I am willing to do this occasionally, but I have other things to do.'"

The formation of the Staff Advisory Council became a significant event for teachers. It defined a place to discuss issues which emerged from the teachers' agenda and was structured so that teachers determined who would sit on the committee.

> The Staff Advisory Council, I think, is alive and well and healthy and functioning. . . . I think it fills a real need in any organization. You can call it a suggestion box, whatever, but I think there has to be some venue for people to voice concerns.

In an advisory capacity formal decisions could not be made by the group. Rather the chair for the committee forwarded the "advice" of the committee to the school's administrators for action and distributed copies of minutes to keep the staff informed. The Staff Advisory Council, although not a decision-making body, was perceived as needed and necessary by most teachers. But these committees were not the only structures and processes for decision-making in the school.

Working Through Teams: What Decisions Did They Make?

Almost without exception, teachers viewed their team as the vehicle for collaboration, communication, support, and survival. "Depending on the decision, decisions are made autonomously by team." Whether or not teachers truly took advantage of the opportunity to make important decisions about teaching and learning in their teams varied. Autonomy in teachers' decision-making occurred through the team, but the level of involvement and strategies for decision-making fluctuated across the school's teams.

> Decisions made by teams are very different from team to team, depending on personalities. It depends on what processes teams have come up with over time. . . . We have spent a lot of time on our team coming up with a decision-making process because it seemed like there was not a clear cut leader. On other teams central decisions are made by the team leader. . . . They fall behind the leader and it is pretty mutual.

Some teams appeared to be quite active in their involvement in making curricular and instructional decisions, and they worked together to make plans which would integrate instruction across content areas. These teams believed that "teaming is part of the answer so that teachers can work together and build on each other's strengths. . . . We reinforce what other teachers have done."

Team planning time that was built into the schedule provided a vehicle for team decision-making. During this time, teams made a variety of decisions about both routine and substantive issues. Teams identified students who would receive special recognition, discussed special needs students, adapted the schedule to accommodate team activities, and shared information about school-wide activities. Other teams used meeting time to discuss and plan for interdisciplinary units.

Not only did the team planning period provide time for teachers to work together and to make decisions, but it also provided opportunities for teachers to learn. Teachers consistently spoke of the supportive environment created by teaming and of the growth that took place by sharing ideas.

Others saw the individual teacher as the primary decision-maker for changes which would be implemented and the team as a support group for individual challenges and decisions. "I don't feel I spend most of my time or my efforts on things that somebody told me that I had to do. I am not cut out for indentured servitude."

District Decision-Making: How Did It Affect the School?

Decisions made at the district level influence the type and rate of change in the school and are viewed by members of the Cross Keys community as both positive and negative influences on the school's progress. While the district did allow a certain degree of autonomy with respect to school decision-making, no additional funding was provided to facilitate changes the school had planned. Declining district finances often resulted in staff reductions which negatively impacted the school's progress toward developing innovative team structures. Direct district intervention also impacted the school's plan.

During the year of this study, a learning community composed of both 7th and 8th grade students was formed. The creation of the multi-age team was part of the school's long-range plan and was composed of teachers who were interested in exploring this type of alternative team structure. Originally, the team was to operate for at least two years and

then teachers would determine the feasibility of the multi-age plan. However, district intervention changed their course. During an interview, the principal explained how the decision to eliminate the multi-age team for 1992-93 had been made.

Interviewer: So the multi-age team won't be organized the same way next year?

Principal: Right. What I have said to the team was that I am willing to give them their same kids back [as 8th graders] and I have talked to them individually. I have not finished the process yet about why that has to be because they are grieving already. I will do everything I can, but it is not going to happen.

Interviewer: Did you make that decision?

Principal: That decision was made for me.

Interviewer: By?

Principal: Central office.

Some district policies and practices caused frustration for staff members. For example, "computer generated report cards" and "pressure from the high school" affected what teachers felt comfortable doing with curriculum and instruction in the school.

While decisions made at the district level did impact the school's progress, it appeared that the school retained a sense of autonomy. Leaders in the school were allowed to make those changes which could be managed autonomously and to define their program in their own way.

Summary

Decisions were made in a variety of ways at Cross Keys. In the past, some fairly traditional committee structures had enhanced the staff's participation in planning the direction, program, and policies for the school; however, these committees were inactive during the year of study. Teams made decisions which impacted the teachers and students who worked together. A faculty-formed council addressed needs which were not part of the school's other structures. Some decisions were made by groups, others made by individuals.

Clearly, the principal had a major role in decision-making in the school. Her well-articulated vision for the school directed her action and decisions. The boundaries for group participation in decision-making were set by that vision. Only decisions which would promote the vision and mission of the school were sanctioned. By selecting members for the formal committees, the principal empowered certain individuals by saying "these are the people that I want to be leaders in the school." While some who were so empowered were viewed by colleagues as leaders and decision-makers, others were not.

Key leaders emerged naturally and were identified consistently by the participants. These leaders were distributed throughout the school and were often involved in making decisions either alone or through groups. Whether through their teams or committees, through their roles or positions, or through the strength of their individual character, they were willing to take risks while making and supporting decisions that would bring their mission to life.

The struggles and questions relating to mission, change, leadership, and decision-making created an element of the atmosphere in the school that would not be apparent to a first-time visitor. An initial visit to the school revealed amiable people, well-ordered classrooms, sparkling hallways, and a flurry of planned activities. The place felt exciting because the people there were excited. The place was stimulating because the people there were stimulated. Underneath the public face, however, lay a current of tension that represented their efforts to become the best they could be.

## How Does It Feel to be Part of the Story of Cross Keys?

"There is underlying tension in this building and it is never gone." This comment told of the pain that people endured when they tried to survive changes made *to* them, when they endeavored to implement changes made *by* them, and when they attempted to adjust to changes made *around* them. Even those who sought change, who thrived on change, and who dealt comfortably with the ambiguity and dissonance that accompanies change, acknowledged the tension that was ever-present in the school. The important role of conflict and tension in the school related to the school's ability to ask the right questions. Many schools would avoid conflict and tension and work towards harmony of thought even if that meant mediocrity. Cross Keys, instead, told part of their story that few schools would have the courage to tell.

Conflict And Tension: Catalyst or Reaction?

Tension in the school served as a catalyst to change, and stimulated discourse and dissonance. It also served as a reaction to changes which have forced people to look at themselves critically and honestly. It represented the disequilibrium that had been created by asking the right questions.

In an effort to explain the underlying tension and to understand its roots, some of the teachers talked of the number of changes made in the school. "When you change and change and change, it begins to be demoralizing." Some spoke of tension as merely a by-product of change itself. "I think that change in general is stressful. Anytime somebody in here goes through change, it is a real adjustment."

Others spoke of the tension created "when you're to the point where [teachers] are harassing secretaries [over assignment of students to teams], you're not a very good team player. I saw a lot of lack of trust in that; trusting that other people are doing what they can do and that they're doing a competent job." Tension often resulted from a perceived communication problem in the building. Communication problems were noted by several teachers who felt the absence of large group forums for discussion. And still others would say that the tension evolved from a difference in how people saw the world.

> The administration has the big picture, the broad view . . . I think we have a narrower view but a more close view . . . and even though the pictures each one has are similar, how each one of us wants to get to that picture is different.

Some would say that communication problems, lack of trust, different perceptions, or reactions to the number of types of change were only masking the underlying fear that people experienced on a personal level when confronted with the challenge of change. Since change was a primary element of the school's focus and mission, everyone was expected to make changes to meet the needs of students. Supports were provided, but the expectation was clear.

> [The principal] is real good at providing resources as best she can. She provides pats on the back and motivation. . . . She makes it almost impossible to say, "I don't want to change." It would be almost like admitting that the only reason you're not going to change is because you just

> don't want to. Most professional educators don't want to use that as the last resort. . . .

Conflict over power, over determining who was in charge, over who would set the agenda, and over who was in and who was out undoubtedly fueled some of the tension in the school. How individuals perceived issues of power and influence, what they believed to be rights associated with being "in" and what they believed was the inference of being "out" helped to determine their relationships with each other and how they spoke about the school.

Clans and Tribes: Who Was In? Who Was Out?

Power struggles in the school between the "ins" and the "outs," the ones with power, the ones who used to have power, and the ones who wanted power, were evident through most of the voices in the school. The change in building principal brought about a change in the power structure of the school. "What she did essentially early on was shift the teacher leadership. In a sense, she took leadership away from people who had had it for years and started to look at other people." As the power shifted, others became active in the leadership and decision-making in the school. Some assumed formal positions on committees or teams, and others emerged in new ways due to their expertise and influence.

But even those who assumed leadership positions in the school understood the impact on those who were not involved in active ways in the decision-making of the school. "If I was one of the folks who wasn't [included], wasn't one of the folks because I don't agree, I would probably feel that I wasn't being treated as well as other folks."

For some, the tension and conflict in the school were personal issues with the principal.

> [Teacher] thinks he should be the principal and he doesn't like [the principal]. He has tried several times to get an appointment and has not gotten it so he feels, well, he is jealous in that regard and he disagrees with her.

For others, it was more a matter of how changes were implemented. "Probably, the reason this feeling [of tension] exists in this school is possibly the way [the principal] goes about accomplishing what she wants to accomplish."

For those teachers not actively sought out, those who did not perceive themselves as "in" because their opinion was not solicited, those who were not involved in decision-making in the school, life was different at Cross Keys. They, in fact, created a different life for the school.

> I think [the school] is going in the right direction. But I think that sometimes teachers who aren't on the bus do not feel valued and that is a real source of tension.

Conflict And Tension: Who Was Not on the Bus?

Teachers seen by their colleagues as unable or unwilling to "move" were identified by many voices as "nay-sayers," "resisters," "foot-draggers," or "detractors." It was clear that the resisters in the building were a part of the underlying conflict and tension in the school. Their resistance was both subtle and overt. Their presence was felt and acknowledged by others in the school. "I believe there is a contingent of faculty that has just decided to put their feet down and be obstacles to everything that is being tried in the building." Some understood resistance differently. "Resisters is not a number, it is a degree. If you don't know about something or you are not secure in something, you may be a foot dragger . . . but once you get involved in it, then you can become very enthusiastic about it."

Resistance was also a response to differing perceptions of the role that a building principal should take in the school. This was made clear when one teacher said to the principal,

> You are the fifth principal in this building, and you are the first one who ever thought about instruction and curriculum. There were all mangers of the building. And we are having trouble adjusting to that.

The principal recognized that her behavior and style were different from her predecessors. Whether this difference was described as a personality conflict or a difference in style, resisters in the building identified their differences in perspective as a source of conflict and tension. Even those who supported the direction she had set for the school struggled with the reality of what working in the school really meant.

> There's a real push-pull, push-pull and that has been true, I think, since the second year [the principal] has been here. . . . I think that's real typical from the people who are her real promoters and really like the direction in which

> we're going and from the people that are dragging their heels, kicking and screaming. . . . We're alternately energized and absolutely exhausted by the woman.

Resistance in the building was also identified as a result of an unwillingness, inability, or lack of readiness to make the hard changes in practice. Challenging teachers to change what they had been doing for twenty years tested their ability to separate themselves from the teaching style with which they are comfortable. It prompted self-evaluation and probing. Challenging teachers to change because students had changed required a belief that the at-risk students, or marginal learners, were not merely a statistic, but were faces in the classrooms of the school. Challenging teachers to change led to resistance. But the fact that there were people labeled as resisters, or detractors, or nay-sayers, or foot-draggers in the building was not surprising. Most organizations that attempt any type of change at all experience the range of responses which individuals can make to change efforts.

> You need to achieve what you need to achieve without feeling you have to have 100% staff deeply, philosophically, committed. We have never had that in anything. . . . We did not have that in the Persian Gulf. . . . We did not have it in the search for the moon. . . . We did not even have it in WWII. . . . It is just not going to happen.

But for those who resisted, life *in* the school and life *for* the school was clearly different than for those who were active and involved in bringing about the changes that were taking place. One voice encouraged resisters to rethink their position and to acknowledge that they did have a choice.

> People have all had the chance to buy into [the changes] and to be part of it and I think when you do that you can be happier with what you do. If you resist, than after awhile you just feel that your advice is not looked for anymore and that it is not taken into consideration because you've been blocking things. Then you become more resentful and it just becomes that much harder to buy into things.

If the resisters were willing to change, however, it would require an equal willingness on the part of their colleagues to allow them this freedom. They would need to be shown that "buying in" was not "selling out."

Working with an Experienced Staff: What Happened When Veterans Changed?

With an average of 19 years of experience, for many in the same building, teachers in the school had spent time enough in their profession to develop a sense of security about their practice and a sense of what to expect about how schools should operate, and how people in them should behave. Their experience would serve them both as a strength and a hindrance in their efforts to make changes in the school.

In talking with and observing teachers in the building, it became obvious that these people were friends. They respected one another and took pride in their school and in each other. They had shared significant moments in one another's lives, and they were bound together by their common experiences in the school. The support that teachers found in their relationships with one another helped to create an atmosphere of collegiality. They had developed a working relationship which was part of the norm of the school. But this norm would also impact their responses to change. "There are quite a few people here that have been here for a very long time, and it does put a culture together somewhat which makes change more difficult."

So, not only did the years of experience of the staff serve as a rich resource for the school, but it also impacted its ability to change. And since many had devoted their careers to the profession, they were anticipating their retirement in the not-so-distant future. Thus, their willingness to undergo the pain and struggle to make a sweeping change at that point in their careers was significantly decreased. "Three fourths of the staff is going to retire in the next three to four years. They have all been at this business for a long time . . . [and they're saying] I can teach most of my kids, so just leave me alone."

Since most of the faculty shared a common history of what had taken place in the school, they had already worked out the intricacies of how they would interact with each other. Like most schools, Cross Keys had an unwritten code of behavior which defined the limits of what teachers should do, how they should act, and what were the acceptable limits. Their code defined expectations for teacher and administrative behavior around a traditional secondary school orientation, thereby placing limitations on one another by role. Although individuals in the school had character strength, years of experience behind

them, and a solid reputation with their colleagues, when they stepped out of line, they were quickly brought back into the fold. "People have a hard time with loyalties. If they felt that their loyalty was with a group of people, while they may not agree with them 100%, since they've been friends, then they have to go along with them." Their code places additional stress on the individuals who chose to stand out as leaders in the school. If, for example, teachers perceived as leaders in the school agreed with the principal on a given controversial issue, they were viewed by some of their colleagues as disloyal. They were "beaten up" and encouraged to rethink their position to realign with their "friends." Those who were leaders in the school faced this social pressure and took the risk of being excluded from the social fabric of the school. Some, over time, were ostracized and permanently excluded, while others worked hard to remain acceptable, even if on the fringe.

The principal also discussed her experience with the power of the "unwritten code" when she worked with staff members during her first year in the building to set the course for the school.

> During the first year when I asked for help, I got several who were strong leaders who were willing to work together and stay after school to complete projects. The rest of the staff, however, beat up on them and after the first year, those involved said they couldn't do it anymore. [Their colleagues] had gotten to them.

Teachers also spoke of the pressure that staff members put on one another for their involvement in certain committees and activities.

> The faculty is extremely opinionated. I don't think that is a bad word. They have what they believe and what they want to say, and they will say it. Those people [on the SIT committee] pretty much got burned, I think, by the fact that this committee in some way jeopardized their position with the faculty.

The principal's experiences led her to an understanding that the private and public disclosures and realizations that teachers shared were impacted by more than her style, or her vision, or her behavior. She understood that the unwritten code placed limitations on what teachers said publicly with their colleagues at hand. Her discovery led her to a

practice of meeting individually with teachers. She avoided large group sessions where the possibility of "grousing" or "gritching" was possible. She valued individual time with staff members not only for what she learned from them, but for the relationship she could develop with them when they could truly be themselves. "It is always private, always individual. Because if you publicly say you are for something that I am for, or administration is for, then the others take exception and then they grouse at you and pick at you."

Program Evaluation: Finding out What Worked, or, How to Buy Time and Release Pressure?

Just as conflict and tension were pervasive in the school, so too were comments about the need to evaluate the program which appeared to be yet another source of conflict and tension in the school. During formal and informal interviews, the voices of the school told of their frustration with an apparent lack of program review.

> I think the thing that bothers me the most is that we don't evaluate. We jump from thing to thing to thing. We don't weed out the good, bad, or indifferent . . . we just go on to the next thing without looking seriously at some of what we have done before.

It was clear, however, that *program evaluation* meant different things to different people.

Monitoring of the program appeared to be primarily an informal process in the school. Teachers adapted units or lessons based on their own classroom data. When students did well, most took this as a sign that the unit or lesson was successful. When students did poorly, teachers evaluated and adapted in their own classrooms. Program evaluation at this level resulted in very little conflict and tension as most decisions were private and personal.

Monitoring of program also took place during some of the monthly faculty meetings during the year. The principal shared achievement test data, demographic information about the school, and student grade profiles which she had prepared to stimulate planning around the implications these data represented. The usefulness of the statistical data as a basis for program evaluation and planning, however, appeared for some to be dependent on their perceptions of its accuracy. One teacher, for example, did not believe that the data were accurate.

> Just the other day, we were told [at a faculty meeting] that the state said [our school] was number three in the state with at-risk students. I don't believe it . . . I just don't believe it.

At this point, when decisions about programs had to be made by groups and perceptions varied, conflict emerged as a result of their difference.

Faculty meeting time was devoted to sharing interdisciplinary units developed by teams, yet many talked of their desire to discuss, across teams, those ideas and activities which had been successful and those which had failed. Although some of the teams held discussions on their own about what had and hadn't worked for them, they wanted an opportunity to share with others what they had learned from their experiences. The minimal amount of time for discussion at faculty meetings did not appear to be sufficient for some.

Internal program evaluations have been conducted on the Reading-Writing Workshop in 1987-88, on the use of manipulatives in math in 1990-91, and on the algebra and pre-algebra curriculum in 1991-92, although formal documentation of these evaluations were not reviewed. The Cluster III program was evaluated in 1986-87 and various survey instruments had been used in the school for additional data sources. It appeared, however, that most staff members were unaware of these evaluations and felt that program evaluation was generally lacking in the school. "There may be some place where things are evaluated, but we don't know about it if it is."

This call for program evaluation was also described as a normal response from those who were struggling with change, especially when that change was happening quickly. "When you hear that [the program] is never evaluated, it comes from the stress of people who are having to change and who want to slow it down a little. What you are hearing is a very natural and very human resistance to change in a very turbulent time when change has to be at a hurried pace."

The varying perceptions about what program evaluation meant and how it was or should be conducted contributed to the underlying tension in the school. Some voices questioned the effectiveness of some of the changes and practices in the school and sought a formal evaluation of program. Others felt comfortable that informal evaluations conducted by

teachers in classrooms and through teams were viable means for programmatic decision-making. Clearly, the issues had not been resolved.

The faculty knew that they were not finished with what they had started, yet they were proud of the steps they had taken. Not many schools grapple with issues that create dissonance and discomfort. Leaders in the school worked through informal and formal structures in the school to both stimulate tension by acting on their convictions even when those convictions confronted traditional social norms, and to manage tension which erupted from the numerous changes being made in the school. The willingness of leaders to share their own feelings of discomfort associated with adapting to a new agenda allowed others the freedom to do the same. They knew that they were never going to be done, and their frustration with not seeing the "end of the tunnel" breathed through their dialogue. They knew that change was the only constant in their story. They knew that their story would continue.

## What Can We Learn From Their Story?

The willingness of a school to allow a virtual stranger to spend a year in their midst collecting information that exposed their story to others took courage and trust. Not many are so willing, and I am grateful that the Cross Keys staff provided the opportunity to learn more about schools by learning within them. Their story revealed the intimate details of a school in the midst of transformation. They have traveled a long distance, and they have a long distance yet to go. Their story may help other schools engulfed in the challenges of change and enlighten our understanding of the need for and cost of making substantive changes in schools characterized by tradition.

I believe that Cross Keys is like many American public schools. It once operated in a system of the expected. The policies, procedures, and practices are known because they have built up over the years and have taken on a life of their own. Life in schools feels normal when teaching and learning rituals look the way they have always looked. When textbooks, and worksheets, and rows of chairs greet us at the classroom door, we know that we are in a school. And, while the years have brought modifications, most schools have remained fundamentally unchanged for decades. For a long time this didn't matter. Schools effectively educated those students who came there to learn. Schools could continue to do what had been done before and no one was the lesser for it.

But when different students started showing up at school, students who lived in a society that challenged them with drugs, gangs, broken homes, poverty, and abuse, then doing more of the same meant some would suffer. Something had to be done.

What was done in schools like Cross Keys helped us to better understand what was needed to make change occur, rather than to wait for it to happen. Their initial steps in the process may enlighten what we know about the struggle of change and the value of that struggle.

What Can Be Learned About Mission?

My understanding of the importance of vision and mission for school effectiveness was strengthened by my observations of Cross Keys. Vision provided the school with a purposeful direction. Their vision was informed by research and articulated in the language of scholarly literature on teaching and learning for the early adolescent. Bringing the vision to life, however, was their priority. Leadership in the school encouraged staff to innovate, to explore, and to test ideas which were presented in the literature. Teachers were supported in their efforts to become researchers themselves. They not only used the guiding principles of the national middle school movement, they were part of their formation.

Cross Keys has defined itself around its middle school mission and presented a theoretical definition on a national level. In the process, they came to terms with what was going on inside of the building. Leaders throughout the school infused the mission in all aspects of building operation. They accepted that part of the process of making the changes called for by their mission was the discomfort of people as they experienced change on an individual level. People in the school knew that different opinions and attitudes would create a variety of responses to what the mission meant and how it would be operationalized. And while the principal was clearly a visionary leader in the school, so too were individual teachers who had articulated their beliefs about what their school could become. I believe that they created a living mission by questioning its meaning and then lived with the dissonance that was a by-product of their challenges.

What Can Be Learned About Decision-Making?

I viewed the commitment of the school to a set of guiding principles as a critical influence on the decision-making processes in the school. Decisions delegated to the formal structures in the school were those which would move the school towards realizing its

commitment. Parameters for decision-making appeared to be determined by the principal, and only those decisions which would move the school forward on its course towards becoming a fully functioning middle school were sanctioned. While discussion and challenges as to how the mission would be interpreted were encouraged, when formal or informal groups attempted to make decisions which would alter the school's course, the principal pulled back authority and made the decision alone. She was not afraid to make unpopular decisions or to take control. She sought input through individual discussions, committees, and teams, but defined the boundaries of acceptable outcomes around the principles which were guiding the school.

The organization of the school into teams had been a major organizational practice for several years. The staff members were experienced in the intricacies of the teaming process and were given a great deal of autonomy to make decisions within their teams. While not everyone viewed the decisions that could be made by teams as being significant for the school as a whole, some teams realized that the decisions they made regarding students, planning, scheduling, curriculum, and instruction were indeed the powerful decisions of the school. They saw their role as critical to implementing the school's mission, and they recognized that as a team they were the vehicle for making the difference for students. Others regarded decision-making at the team level as routine. They did not seem to acknowledge that the decisions made at that level were indeed those vital for their students. Some did not realize the leadership and decision-making opportunities they had through their team, and therefore did not exercise them. They appeared to trivialize their role on the team and saw building-level decision-making as a more powerful avenue for influencing change.

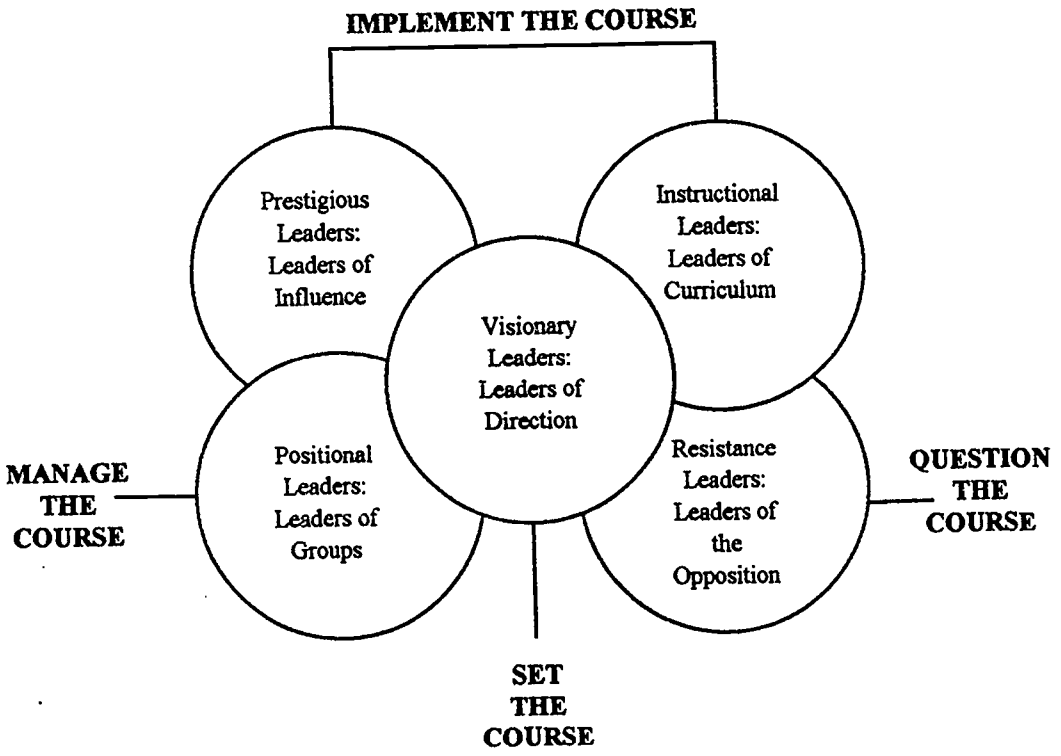
Decision-making in the school was simultaneously autocratic and participatory. Formal and informal structures were available in the school that provided opportunities for involvement in decision-making. Some took advantage of these opportunities and described decision-making as participatory. Others in the school did not or were not involved and described decision-making as autocratic. Of these, some believed that those who held traditional decision-making positions in the school (the principal, team leader, department chair, committee chair) had the authority and responsibility to make decisions and maintained a hierarchical view of decision-making. Regardless of the differing perceptions of the decision-making process, it appeared that all of the decisions in the school were made with the school's guiding mission clearly in focus. Participation was allowed and encouraged, yet when those in the school altered from the course set by the

school, the principal acted alone in making decisions rather than compromising their commitment to students.

What Can We Learn About Leadership?

To better understand the complexity of leadership exhibited in Cross Keys, I devised five categories to classify the various types of leaders identified in the study. Prestigious, instructional, positional, visionary, and resistance leaders were identified as important agents in bringing about the changes in the school (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Typology of Leaders




Both teachers and administrators were identified as leaders in the school and each was viewed as significant contributors to the progress the school had made. *Visionary* leaders provided the focus and direction for the school. By setting the course, they became fundamental to the change process in the school. *Instructional* and *prestigious* leaders implemented the vision and helped others to adapt and adjust to the course the school was taking. They worked out details of how things could be done and were sought out for their expertise, integrity, and courage. *Positional* leaders provided balance. They worked with groups in both the school and district to assure that the activities of the school were

in harmony with their many other competing demands. *Resistance* leaders represented the loyal opposition. They forced serious questioning of the issues and brought to light the struggle of change. The diversity of the dialogue throughout their story highlighted the value of dissonance and disequilibrium in learning how to ask the right questions. Leaders were fluid in their participation in the change process and could be classified in more than one category on the typology. Leaders of influence would become leaders of the opposition and speak out against specific proposals. These leaders made choices about when and how to exercise their leadership and were content at times to be followers as well. And although specific individuals and groups were identified as leaders in the study, the contribution of every individual in the development and progress in the school was acknowledged and valued.

As a visionary leader, the principal's role was important in understanding both leadership and decision-making in the school. The principal had political savvy. She was well respected in the district and region and had developed an intricate network which included state and national contacts. She used her network and skills to bring resources and status to the school in the form of external grants and public recognition. Her entrepreneurial role allowed the school to do more than the per pupil expenditure of the district might have provided. Her knowledge of middle school concepts allowed teachers to become well-informed ahead of most schools that have made a similar commitment to the middle school model. She was strong, assertive, and passionate. Although she worked well and often with parents, she did not "play" to them. Although she worked closely with district administration, she did not allow them to fence her in. In order to make a difference for students, she worked with and through teachers. She tried to remove every barrier that might stand in the way of a teacher meeting the needs of the students. She stripped away excuses of convenience and exposed people to the depths of what it meant to change.

She took on a challenge of great magnitude. She clearly cared about teachers. She wanted them to grow, to feel important, valued, and needed, but she did not accept nor give platitudes of "excellence" if students' needs were not met. Teacher convenience, past practice, or personal comfort were the least of her concerns. Teachers who were only willing to meet students' needs if convenient were not held out as exemplars of preferred practice as they might be in many schools. Instead, the principal used every available resource to help these teachers grow and change. Teachers, however, who were willing at all costs to work to change to meet the needs of their students were acknowledged for their efforts. These teachers spoke with respect for what she had done *for* them by her

pushing and prodding. They conceded that they didn't always like how it felt to be pushed and prodded, but that they knew they had made greater progress toward realizing their mission because of her challenges. Some teachers who did not share the principal's views, argued that their disagreement with the principal did not indicate a lack of concern for students; rather, it was a difference in perception about how student needs could and should be met. I believe that the school's ability to confront this issue directly will have a significant impact on its future course. A fine line appeared to exist between the healthy conflict and tension which emerged in the diversity of voices throughout the story and the potential to turn this diversity into a war of "who cares most for kids." So far, Cross Keys has been adept at pushing the limit to its extremes without allowing their debates to harm students or each other. If they can hold the line and maintain the healthy dissonance they have fostered without taking conflict to its unhealthy extreme or simply giving up, I believe they will accomplish what few schools have done.

Because the principal, by her own admission, resorted to control taking when teachers made decisions that she perceived were not in the best interest of students, her leadership style could not be characterized as participatory. However, she knew that the work to be done at the school was more than any one person should or could do alone. So she set out to empower others to serve as leaders in the school.

Empowering people allowed individuals to participate because *someone else said they could*, because someone *gave* something the other did not have. Teachers at Cross Keys were empowered by the principal to participate on formal committees and to work through teams to make decisions. She "authorized" the Instructional Improvement Committee to look at program. She "endorsed" the School Improvement Team to develop long-range plans. She "sanctioned" the activities developed by the Instructional Resource Persons to provide staff development programs throughout the year. She "gave approval" to the Staff Advisory Council because policy told her she should.

Encouraging participation in decision-making and empowering teachers as leaders was effective for general operational school issues. Some decisions that needed to be made in the school were easier because they required little adaptation from what individuals did on a daily basis. Changes that related to the school's functioning or routine caused little discomfort, and, so many were willing to spend the necessary time and energy to be involved. Most viewed these decisions as positive because they made life in the school smoother and more convenient.

But sometimes decisions were hard, and the changes that were needed were not comfortable or convenient. When these changes felt awkward and required an enormous amount of individual effort, then empowered teacher leaders faced an incredible dilemma. The teachers that participated in making difficult decisions faced the possibility that they would be isolated and ostracized by their colleagues for making decisions that were needed but not popular. They had to forego personal convenience to make decisions which they knew could have implications for them personally and for their colleagues. Some were able to do this and lead the school in making substantive changes for their students. They were unencumbered by the social systems found in most schools.

These types of leaders were scattered throughout the school and exemplified the courage required to make the hard changes. They did not wait to *be* empowered. They already *had* power. They did not wait for others to *give*, they acted on their own beliefs. Sometimes leaders distributed throughout the school acted in harmony with the vision of the school, and sometimes they followed a different cause.

Teachers not seen by other teachers as leaders could not be empowered to make hard changes. They could be involved, and that they were involved was important. Participation yielded a sense of ownership and developed self-confidence for some teachers. But participation alone did not bring about the formidable changes needed in the school.

Teachers who were seen by other teachers as leaders, who were distributed throughout the school, could make the hard changes. They were "universally respected" by their colleagues and were sought out for their character strength, talents, expertise, or vision. They held posts in the school or district which gave them positional power, but their real power came instead from their ability to make change occur, even when change was resisted. The principal could not empower distributed leaders; they had already empowered themselves.

What Can We Learn About Change?

Change became the essence of the Cross Keys story. The changes that the school had experienced since its commitment to the set of guiding principles associated with the national middle school movement were prompted both by external and internal forces. Changes imposed on the school by the district often related to the availability of human and material resources. As the district's enrollment decreased, so too did the financial

resources provided for the school in terms of staff. Teams were reorganized to accommodate fewer teachers in the building, and as a result, class size increased. But this was not the only district influence felt by the school.

The absence of a district commitment to the middle school philosophy placed the school in a precarious position. While the district allowed the school to plan and implement many middle school concepts, there was no district focus, direction, or understanding of what it meant to operationalize these principles. The formation of a district study committee to investigate the concept held promise, yet the school was often forced to battle district policies and personnel practices which were not congruent to how a middle school should operate. The building principal proved herself as a risk-taker when confronting the lack of understanding at the district level. She effectively used her national, state and regional status in the middle school movement to secure for the school needed resources and support.

But I believe the real story of change in the school focused primarily on those changes which were internally orchestrated. How these changes were envisioned, planned, and implemented told of the trauma which is inescapable when making substantive change.

The reform movement in education sweeping across the nation calls for a restructuring of American public schools. National agendas have been developed to centralize curriculum and mandate national testing in an attempt to get schools to change and to be more accountable to those they serve. Perhaps these efforts are laudable, but the question remains, will they work?

School *restructuring*, or school *reform* efforts have tried to change schools by refining, adapting, reorganizing, or readjusting existing structures and practices. What is perceived to be *broken* is subsequently *fixed*, often in isolation of the system. The focus has been on the parts, rather than the whole. But this approach does indeed have its problems.

*We cannot solve a problem at the same level of thinking we were at when we created it* (A. Einstein).

Reform and restructuring do not necessarily require that problems be solved from a different perspective. Perhaps the focus is misplaced. Perhaps instead of reform or restructuring, we need to approach the problems in schools from a new and different

perspective through a revolution of thought. To actually change practices in schools, perhaps we first need to change personal paradigms.

The notion of an educational paradigm shift is not new. The leadership at Cross Keys knew how important it would be for people in the school to have a personal experience that would alter their way of thinking and seeing their world. They gave themselves opportunities for this to happen for they understood that *many* significant experiences would be necessary for people to give up what they know. They had used both emotional and cognitive triggers to stimulate a change in perspective for individuals. And because they worked in systems "whose very souls are addicted to normalizing," they knew that their work would be hard.

> And [we] went on, struggling to remain the same, with angry outbursts at each other, at students. We wanted more rules, more discipline, more retention, better parents. We wanted to teach our content, undaunted by these disturbing outside influences. We mourned our past. We were hurting....and kids were hurting also (Cross Keys Middle School, *National Middle School Presentation Document*, 1991).

Although the work was hard, the Cross Keys staff had forced themselves to reflect critically on events and experiences which have led for some to a paradigm shift. Teachers developed what were called "Personal Turning Points" in preparation for a presentation at the National Middle School Conference (1991). Teachers shared where they were in the process of change and identified those elements which appeared to be significant for them. A turning point was described as "a series of crossroads . . . a long, wandering path of faltering steps," "not a particular moment in time, but a period of time during which I asked the question 'why.'" They occurred when individuals realized that they could present a "we can do it" attitude and could "use the force of example instead of argument." Turning points were the "freedom to choose," "to stand free and equal," "to follow a dream," and to "be allowed to take risks." They were an "evolution" for people who were "allowed to contribute as a person and not just as a teacher" (See Cross Keys Middle School, *National Middle School Conference Document*, 1991).

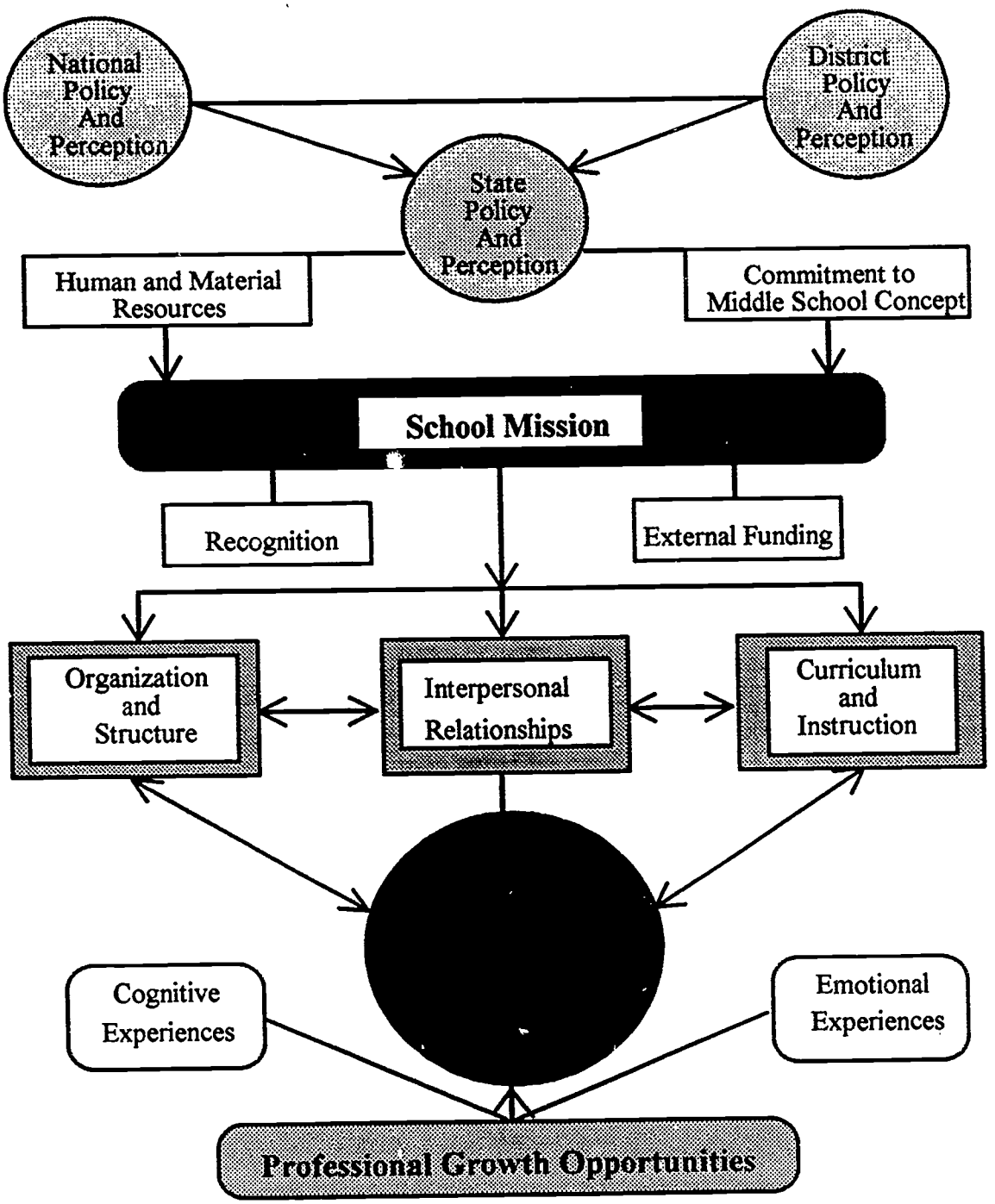
These events were personal. They were moving. And they were hard! The school had worked to cause people to expose themselves in personal ways to change. They have labored to bring about paradigm shifts so that the problems in their school could be solved from a different level of thinking. They have made progress and they are still working.

As people struggled with what it meant to shift perspective, they needed interpersonal skills to reconnect in new ways to each other. They needed to refine how they communicated and how they listened. They needed to understand that their struggle was personal and that it was hard. They created forums for discussion which were meaningful and were learning how to break down the social networks to make change a matter of course rather than a matter of allegiance.

The school's ability to continue to develop and refine new communication skills will be critical in their future. As they "struggled" to shift paradigms, they looked for someone or something to blame for their pain. Those who championed change were challenged. Conflict became personal as the level of discomfort escalated. Subversive activities emerged in an attempt to deter, distract, and sidetrack the change effort. In helping people to welcome and grow from new experiences, program evaluation in the school will need to continue to become more clearly defined, implemented, and communicated. Effective monitoring and feedback should redirect activities to more meaningful dialogue and help people in the school see when their pain and struggle results in improvements for students, and when it does not. Part of the burden for leaders in the school will be to recognize this process and to realize that it will not only be an uncomfortable process for others, but for them as well. It is human to want to be liked and important to be humane, but leaders of change will not win a popularity contest. To be amiable and likable is easy. To be a leader is not.

This story about Cross Keys ends where it began: with questions which were hard to ask and answers even more elusive. The essence of what can be learned from this study is represented graphically in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Change Interaction Model



We can see the intricate pattern of influences leading to substantive change in schools. School districts, influenced by national and state perceptions of what should be important in schools, can provide the impetus for change, or can simply get out of the way of schools choosing change on their own. The national, state, and district forces represent the bureaucracy which the school may need to challenge for change to occur. A well-defined school mission, which articulates a set of guiding principles for the school, comes alive as it is debated and questioned. Gaining recognition from others enhances the school's perception of itself, provides exposure to broader networks, and brings additional resources to the school for its work. The ability to change the structure and organization, curriculum and instruction, and interpersonal networks of the school will be impacted by the perspective from which individuals approach change. Professional growth activities can provide opportunities for people to experience a change in paradigm by providing the cognitive experiences necessary to know and understand the new skills and practices which will be needed and the emotional experiences which will allow individuals to feel their response.

A school like Cross Keys needs to be visited and studied, not because we can go there to find all the answers, but because they can help us learn how to ask questions. We can learn which questions are important to ask and we can see people like ourselves, struggling with the daily issues of survival, yet confronting the broader issues of progress. We can see people fighting to make change and fighting to be left alone. We can see those who will ignore, those who will follow, and those who will lead. We can see how a change in personal paradigm can lead to a change in practice. We can see that they are still working to meet the needs of their students and that they take pride in their accomplishments. With them, we can look into the face of change and know it is not our enemy.